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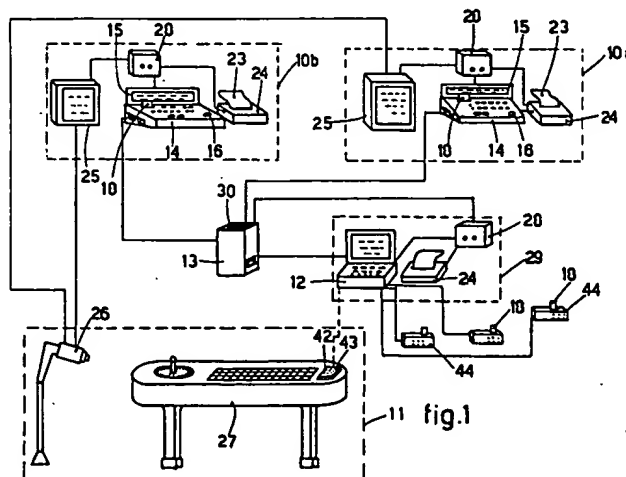
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(54) System for playing games of chance at a distance from gaming houses.

(57) System for playing games of chance at a distance from gaming houses, which is suitable to enable a player to take part in a desired game at a distance from the gaming house and comprises, for each player located at a distant place (10), at least means acting as a keyboard (14) for conversing and setting, these keyboard means (14) including means

(15) to display the data thus set and actuator means (17) cooperating with a personalised card (18), the keyboard means (14) being associated with a modem/exchange (13) for connection to a specifically employed data transmission line, which is associated with a central computer (12) governed by a gaming table (27).



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This invention concerns a system for playing games of chance at a distance from gaming houses, as set forth in the main claim.

The system according to the invention concerns advantageously, but not only, those gaming houses which have available within their structure, or in close collaboration with their structure, hotels, motels, cabins on passenger ships or merely equipped waiting rooms, whether adjacent to or even located at a distance from, the main hall of the gaming house.

It is known that one of the main problems of gaming houses is to make possible the maximum possible participation in the betting, particularly with roulette tables, tombola or with a game of chance of the same type without problems arising due to excessive attendance, which entail disorder, noisiness and participation in the game by users of the premises under conditions which are not the best.

In fact, it is known that in a gaming house the roulette tables are often unable to accommodate, with participation in the game, all the users in question, and the excessive number of participants in the betting often spoils partly the pleasure of the game and also creates problems for the croupier or for the other persons employed in the management and performance of the game itself.

This invention therefore has the purpose of increasing as much as possible the number of possible participants in the betting and of ensuring a high degree of satisfaction of the persons taking part in the game, while providing at the same time maximum security against possible tricks by players who are present to the detriment of the operation of the gaming house itself.

For this reason and also so as to achieve further advantages, the present applicants have designed, tested and embodied this invention.

This invention is set forth and characterised in the main claim, while the dependent claims describe variants of the idea of the main embodiment.

This invention is embodied with a system which enables persons to take part at a distance in a game of chance in gaming rooms and, in particular, but not only, in games of chance such as roulette, bingo, tombola, lotteries, etc.

This invention employs, as means of the communication, transmission and management of the betting, a connection by cable on a specifically employed telephone line, a modem/exchange and at least one central computer.

The telephone line thus specifically employed may form part of a closed-circuit connection within the structure comprising the gaming house or may be a normal telephone line of the public system.

The equipped room for playing at a distance may advantageously be a hotel room or a cabin on

a passenger ship, but also merely a room adjacent to the main hall of the gaming house or else an equipped room distant from the main gaming hall.

This equipped room has to comprise at least one telephone line specifically intended for the purpose, means acting as a keyboard and specifically equipped for the desired type or types of game, a connection to a modem/exchange for connection to the central computer controlling the phases of the game and a video equipment to display the gaming hall and for controlling purposes.

According to the invention, the means acting as a keyboard, depending on the desired type of game, include a plurality of keys or pushbuttons by which the user sets the amount betted and selects the bets.

According to a preferred embodiment the means acting as a keyboard may consist of a keyboard having a conventional configuration and specifically structured according to the desired type of game.

We shall refer to this type of keyboard in the description that follows.

According to a variant the means acting as a keyboard consist of a video display terminal connected to the central computer.

According to this variant the video display terminal is of a type with selectable windows showing the gaming options, which may be selected by the user by pressing the window of the video display terminal corresponding to the chosen option.

The means acting as a keyboard also include keys for sending or correcting the bet and possibly other keys or pushbuttons relating to the services and/or various functions which can be selected by the user.

According to a variant each key can be associated with means that indicate visually the amount and/or the choice made.

The keyboard is equipped with visual indicator means which show the instructions for the start-up of the game and which display the functions and operations carried out by the user.

According to a variant the keyboard can be equipped, together with the visual indicator means, with vocal synthesis equipment, which announces to the user the instructions for start-up of the game and repeats vocally the operations which the user has carried out on the keyboard.

According to another variant the keyboard is interfaced with, or contains within itself, a printer which, at the end of the game, prints on a paper support all the operations carried out by the user, any winnings, etc.

Actuation of the game takes place by inserting in the keyboard a specific identification card, for instance a card of the microprocessor type (chip

card).

This card, which is issued by the manager of the gaming house after it has been loaded by suitable compilers interfaced with the central computer, bears the identification data of the user who wishes to have access to the games at a distance.

This identification card may contain a selection code in a language chosen by the user, this code being set by the central computer, both for visual messages on the visual indicator means and for vocal messages.

According to the invention the identification code is recorded univocally by the central computer and, depending on the sum paid and/or on the type of customer and/or on the basis of other discretionary factors established by the manager of the gaming house, is associated with a maximum determined credit level to be allowed to that customer.

The insertion of the identification card in a suitable reader on the keyboard causes start-up of the system.

This start-up entails disconnection of the telephone terminal in the equipped room, in the hotel room, etc. and entails switching of the telephone line onto the modem/exchange so as to make possible the communication between the keyboard and the central computer together with physical elimination, by means of a relay or other analogous means, of the connection between the telephone terminal and the telephone exchange.

This switching is necessary to create the specific line intended for communication between the user and the central computer.

According to the invention the modem/exchange includes a number of modem cards equal to the number of possible simultaneously enabled users, that is to say, equal to the number of keyboards which may be actuated, thus ensuring a connection in real time between all the keyboards and the central computer.

When the keyboard has been connected to the central computer through the specifically employed telephone line and the modem/exchange, the method to enable the game includes the request for the personal identification code.

If the code is recognised by the central computer, the keyboard is enabled and the user can start betting.

For security reasons the invention includes, according to a variant, confirmation of the identification of the user, for instance by requiring a new keying of the code either after a desired number of games or at random.

Moreover, for further security the keyboard can be disabled and cut out by the central computer, even with the card inserted, after a determined period of inactivity.

According to the invention the user can follow the progress of the game by a television apparatus pre-arranged in the equipped room, in the hotel room or in the ship's cabin in which the user is playing.

This television apparatus is connected to a telecamera pre-arranged to show one of the gaming places, for instance a roulette table, a tombola screen, etc. in the main gaming hall.

For reasons of the security of the gaming hall, for instance in the case of roulette, the whole travel of the ball on the wheel is not shown, nor is the croupier shown during his movements.

According to a variant the television apparatus is switched on and tuned automatically to the channel connected to the telecamera in the gaming hall when the system is switched on after insertion of the identification card.

According to the invention the croupier and/or the operator of the central computer have available a pushbutton which disables all the betting at the time of announcement of the end of the game.

Moreover, according to the invention the croupier and/or the operator of the central computer have available a keyboard by which they set and communicate the winning number to the central computer. This keyboard may possibly also include the pushbutton for disabling the betting.

Thus the central computer can allot possible winnings to the individual users and can communicate the amount thereof by displays and/or vocal communication and/or by printing.

The attached figures are given as a non-restrictive example and show some preferred embodiments of the invention as follows:-

- Fig.1 shows a diagram of a possible embodiment of the system according to the invention;
- Fig.2 is a block diagram of the layout of functioning of the system according to the invention;
- Fig.3 shows a possible keyboard according to the invention;
- Figs.4 and 5 show two possible embodiments of the keyboard according to the invention, these embodiments being used for roulette and for tombola or bingo respectively.

Fig.1 shows a basic diagram of the system for games of chance played at a distance according to the invention.

For the sake of simplicity the figure shows only two gaming centres 10a and 10b located at a distance from a main hall 11 of the gaming house.

However, within limits due to the data processing capacity of a central computer 12, which may be a personal computer for instance, to the dimen-

sion of a modem/exchange 13 and to the number of telephone lines installed and leading to the modem/exchange 13, the number of these gaming centres 10 can be increased to the desired number.

Each gaming centre 10 has to be equipped at least with a multipurpose keyboard 14 provided with a console with keys and/or various pushbuttons and at least with a display 15 to display the instructions and bets.

In this case the keyboard 14 is equipped with vocal synthesis equipment with an external loudspeaker 16 for the vocal delivery of messages and instructions and for possible repetition of the operations carried out by the user.

The keyboard 14 also includes a reader 17 for insertion and reading of the user card 18.

Moreover, according to the invention each key 19 of the keyboard 14 is associated with a light emitting diode (LED) 20 (Fig.3) to indicate the selection made of the value of the bet and/or of the choice of the bet, for instance a specific roulette or tombola number.

In the case of Fig.3 the keys 119 may have the purpose of selecting the amount of the bet, while the keys 21 and 22 respectively are the keys which set the bet and cancel the bet in the event of a possible setting error.

Furthermore, the keyboard 14 comprises advantageously internal security switches (dip switches, which are not shown here), which can be modified by the operator in charge, for identification by the central computer 12.

Besides, the keyboard 14 can be divided into several sections for taking part in different games, for instance.

According to the invention the keyboard 14 is advantageously interfaced with and/or equipped with a printer 24 for printing on a paper support 23, at the end of each bet for instance, all the operations carried out by the user, his possible winnings, his credit balance, etc.

Each gaming centre 10 is provided with a television plant 25 which is connected to at least one telecamera 26, which shows within the main gaming hall 11 the appointed roulette table 27 pre-arranged for the game at a distance, or else the bingo or tombola screen or board, etc.

According to a variant the television plant 25 is actuated and automatically tuned to the pre-arranged channel for showing the main gaming hall 11 at the time of the enabling of the keyboard 14 for the game.

All the elements within each gaming centre 10 located at a distance are connected to electricity supply means for independent working when the electricity mains supply has broken down, such means being an uninterruptible power supply sys-

tem 28.

The enabling of the keyboard 14 for the games occurs upon identification of the personal code on the user card 18; this user card 18 according to the invention consists of a chip card, that is to say, a card with a microprocessor for the writing and reading of data.

The user card 18 is loaded (41 - Fig.2) by a plurality of compilers 44 interfaced with the central computer 12 and arranged at accounting centres connected to the control room 29 of the gaming hall 11.

This loading includes the transcribing onto the user card 18 of the personal code of the user and the possible crediting of the sum paid by the user.

According to a variant the compilers 44 can set, by transcription onto the user card 18, a maximum permitted credit depending on the type of customer; when this credit has been used up, the user is disabled from playing.

The compilers 44 may be provided with electronic anti-intrusion security means for the security of the operation of the gaming hall 11, these means being a code of identification of the machine operator for instance.

The central computer 12 is associated with its own printer 24 and with its own independent electricity supply means 28 for use in the event of a breakdown of the mains supply, and these means may also possibly serve the modem/exchange 13.

The central computer 12 can also be associated with an auxiliary computer (not shown here) which takes action in the event of breakdowns and anomalies.

The user card 18 may contain a code for selection of a desired language chosen by the user for visual and vocal messages.

According to the invention, for the security of the gaming houses, the management of the winnings takes place always by means of the central computer 12 and not by means of any credits on the user cards 18, these cards 18 being used merely for the identification and enabling of the players.

In this case the gaming table 27 is equipped with a central keyboard 42, which is connected to the central computer 12 and comprises at least one pushbutton 43 for the disabling of the games after the signal has been given for the ending of the games, and also comprises a plurality of keys and possible relative light emitting diodes for communicating to the central computer 12 the winning number.

The central computer 12 can thus process and communicate all the options and winning combinations.

The enabling of the games takes place (Fig.2) by insertion 31 of the user card 18 in the appro-

priate reader 17 on the keyboard 14.

This operation switches on the system, disconnects automatically and physically 32 the telephone line connected to the relative gaming centre 10 and, by means of the modem/exchange 13 , puts in communication univocally and specifically the keyboard 14 with the central computer or personal computer 12 positioned advantageously in a control room 29 of the main gaming hall 11.

The modem/exchange 13 is equipped with a plurality of modem cards 30 equal in number to the number of keyboards 14 which can be actuated simultaneously, that is to say, to the number of gaming centres 10 which can be connected to the main gaming hall 11 for playing at a distance.

In this way a univocal connection in real time is ensured between the keyboard 14 and the central computer 12.

When this connection has taken place, the central computer 12 requests 33 the keying of the personal identification code on the keyboard 14 and, when identification has taken place, enables that keyboard 14 for playing 34.

The user can start the betting 35 with a continuous communication with the central computer 12, which confirms the validity of the bets, stores those bets and communicates from time to time the credit available for the next game.

All the bets and operations of the user are displayed 36 on the display 15 of the keyboard 14 and/or are communicated vocally 37 by means of the loud-speaker 16.

At the end of each bet or at the end of all the games of the user the operations are printed 38 by the printer 24.

The user, when he wishes to stop playing, withdraws 39 the user card 18 from the reader 17 and the keyboard 14 is disabled 40.

Figs.4 and 5 respectively show two possible forms of embodiment of the gaming keyboard 14 for playing roulette or for other games such as tombola or bingo respectively.

Claims

1. System for playing games of chance at a distance from gaming houses which is suitable to enable a player to take part in a desired game at a distance from the gaming house and is characterised in that it comprises, for each player located at a distant place (10), at least means acting as a keyboard (14) for conversing and setting, these keyboard means (14) including means (15) to display the data thus set and actuator means (17) cooperating with a personalised card (18), the keyboard means (14) being associated with a modem/exchange (13) for connection to a specifically employed

data transmission line, which is associated with a central computer (12) governed by a gaming table (27).

2. System as in Claim 1, in which the gaming table (27) is associated with temporary telecamera means (26) cooperating with a video system (25) located in the distant gaming place (10).
3. System as in Claim 1 or 2, in which the gaming table (27) is associated with means for the temporary disabling (43) of the variation of games by the keyboard (14) located in the distant place.
4. System as in any claim hereinbefore, in which the gaming table (27) is associated with means (42) providing information of the results of games and governed by the central computer (12).
5. System as in any claim hereinbefore, in which the user's keyboard (14) is associated with means (24) printing the details of games.
6. System as in any claim hereinbefore, in which the central computer (12) has a procedure for the random control of the identity of players located at a distance.
7. System as in any claim hereinbefore, in which the central computer (12) has a procedure for the automatic disabling of a keyboard (14) after a pre-determined period of inactivity of the same.
8. System as in any claim hereinbefore, in which the means acting as a keyboard (14) consist of a video display terminal of the computer, this video display terminal being of a type suitable to display windows reproducing the gaming options, these gaming options being capable of being selected individually by the user by manual pressure on the video display terminal itself.

